

## **From the Consul's Desk: Visa Fraud: Don't Do It!**

Traveling to the United States? Great! Need a visa? Yes. Thinking of cheating the system? Don't!

The United States welcomes all legitimate travelers and we are pleased that travel between India and America continues to grow and prosper. It benefits both our countries when this happens. But when it comes to U.S. visas, there are no shortcuts. Our scrutiny remains strict. Our consular staff is committed to making lawful and genuine travel possible while also detecting and punishing visa fraud when it occurs. And so our advice to legitimate travelers applying for a visa is the same as it always is, to follow these three guidelines: use only official information, present only genuine documents, and always tell the truth.

First, official information is best. People who seek to travel to the U.S. should beware of consultants who say they have special "insider" information for obtaining a visa. Using these paid consultants risks your money and risks a permanent bar on traveling to the United States. Most of these "experts" have never traveled to the United States, don't have a U.S. visa, and offer dangerously bad guidance about how to get one.

Don't be victimized by predatory visa consultants. Don't risk it all by trusting someone who charges money for false information that the U.S. government provides accurately, for free. In fact, when it comes to visas, there is no insider information—it is all available on the internet. Get free and complete information about visa requirements and the visa application process from official sources: from the U.S. Consulate General in Chennai (<http://chennai.usconsulate.gov>) and from VFS (Visa Facilitation Services), the Consulate's authorized visa appointment services provider (<http://www.vfs-usa.co.in>). And for even more information, check out [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov), for in-depth answers to your questions.

Second, submit only genuine documents. Strictly avoid documents sold by document vendors or brokers, no matter how appealing and impressive a well-funded bank account, a prestigious degree certificate, or an official letter from a VIP may seem. It doesn't matter how many official stamps, seals, ribbons, signatures or endorsements these false documents have. They're still fake. And they're going to cause you serious problems.

It is no secret that the U.S. Consulate General in Chennai regularly must request that local police arrest and prosecute visa applicants who presented fake documents. Visa fraud arrests happen fairly often, in all kinds of visa cases. We take fraud seriously. We spot it quickly. We support local authorities as they prosecute it thoroughly. And we want you to avoid the same fate of those who are now facing criminal charges.

Most important, tell the truth on all visa forms and during the visa interview with a consular officer. Remember, you alone are responsible for the accuracy of the information in your application. Intentionally submitting false information either on the application itself or during the visa interview can lead to a finding of a permanent ineligibility. Never

sign the application you are submitting without reviewing it first for accuracy, especially if you have had help from a family member or friend when filling it out.

Your visa interview will be with an American visa officer. If you don't understand an interview question, ask the officer to repeat it. Don't answer questions with the hope of telling the visa officer what you think he or she "wants" to hear. What do we want to hear? The truth. Applicants who receive interview coaching should be wary of such services. The end result of coaching is that every client sounds exactly alike. This diminishes your credibility when you offer rehearsed, memorized answers and cannot hold a normal conversation with a visa officer. In other words, fake answers are obvious. And fake answers are like fake documents: they lead only one direction, to visa refusal, and to disqualification from U.S. travel—permanently.

The U.S. Consulate General in Chennai has highly trained and practiced visa staffs, who believe in what they do —namely, to facilitate legitimate travel to the United States, and to prevent travel by people trying to abuse the system. We realize that most people are legitimate travelers, and we want them to travel easily and expeditiously for tourism, business, or study. We also wish to help those people avoid some of the pitfalls and snares of visa fraud.

U.S. Consulate General: <http://chennai.usconsulate.gov>